



Caltrans Adopts 20-Year Stormwater Plan

Source: Division of Environmental

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Until last year, Caltrans' Stormwater Management Program had 84 specific plans and 84 potential ways of enacting them for polluted watersheds, with efforts specific to those individual basins or watersheds. It also had a wide range of timelines for those plans, from 10 years to more than 30.

Taken together, those methods were inconsistent and inefficient. So, in 2014 Caltrans standardized its approach and adopted a 20-year plan to bring stormwater discharges from 33,000 acres of highway rights-of-way up to federal clean-water standards and those of the State Water Resources Control Board.

These efforts are mandated through a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit — also called Waste Discharge Requirements under state law — that regulate discharges of stormwater into the waters of the U.S. and waters of the state.

Caltrans is responsible for much more than the land alongside the 4,100 centerline miles in the state highway system. Its stewardship spans watersheds that cover 28 percent of the state. In fiscal year 2014-2015, more than 100 sites were monitored for stormwater quality. The list continues to grow, with more than two-thirds of the state watersheds draining to water bodies listed as “impaired.”

Each acre from which stormwater runoff is retained, treated or otherwise controlled prior to discharge to California's waters is accounted for and credited towards permit compliance. Since this method was initiated in July 2014, Caltrans has qualified for approximately 3,600 compliance unit credits corresponding to an equivalent numbers of acres treated. Details of compliance credits in the various watersheds are summarized in the annual Caltrans Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Status Review Report.

Caltrans continues its research into pollution control technologies that are compatible with highway infrastructure and that efficiently and effectively remove roadway pollutants.

Caltrans can earn its credits, or compliance units by:

- Treating an acre of right-of-way using best management practices approved in the Stormwater Management Plan.
- Coordinating implementation efforts with municipalities in the impaired watershed, and investing in resources to fund projects that treat stormwater runoff that are focused on the TMDL pollutant. Caltrans will receive one compliance unit for each \$88,000 spent in cooperative implementation with other municipal storm sewer programs.
- Funding a grant program (to be administered by the State Water Board) that will provide resources to municipal programs pursuing compliance projects in TMDL watersheds.

The program anticipates that stormwater quality monitoring will continue to increase, as new sites are identified, additional treatment best management practices are installed and retrofits are completed.